

**Report from the chairman of the working group on SSN/VMS synergies
for consideration by the Heads of Maritime Administration of participating states
(ES, FR, IT) and agencies involved in the pilot project**

1. Introduction

Following publication of the Commission Green paper on a future EU integrated maritime policy, questions were raised on how EMSA should move forward towards integrating existing and future maritime surveillance systems for cross-sectoral cooperation. EMSA contacted three Member States (Italy, France and Spain) proposing they participate in a traffic surveillance pilot project addressing "SSN/VMS synergies."

All three Administrations have in principle agreed to participate in the proposed initiative and have assigned technical experts to deal with the associated issues.

2. Legal background

The initiative to investigate synergies between SSN and VMS arose without having any clear legal basis, except for a common interest based on the Directive 2009/17/EC new carriage requirement, requiring fishing vessels above 15 m to be fitted with AIS.

More recently however, the CFCA considers that *Council regulation No.1224/2009* "establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy" provides a sound legal basis. In particular, Article 10 states that "*MSs should use AIS data to cross-check it with other available sources. They shall also ensure that AIS data for fishing vessels flying their flag is made available to their national fisheries control authorities and shall ensure regular monitoring of the accuracy of data*".

3. Benefits of the VMS/SSN pilot project

The VMS/SSN pilot project for fishing vessels has the following potential benefits:

- VMS messages are provided to Fisheries Monitoring Centres (FMCs) every two hours, whereas AIS information can be every 6 minutes. FMCs would have more fresh and up-to-date information on the location of fishing vessels within AIS range.
- With two on board sources of information (one of them broadcast), SSN AIS data could be used to verify VMS data. By using information provided from both systems, the monitoring of identity and position would continue even if VMS transmissions ceased (due to e.g. technical failure).
- AIS message information in SSN is more comprehensive than VMS and so additional information would be made available to FMCs for operational use.

- SSN AIS information is free of charge to authorised users and would be provided to FMCs via SSN without additional communication costs.
- Based on EMSA previous experience with such data, additional benefits will emerge and will be assessed and acted upon where appropriate during the pilot projects.

4. Outcome of the technical meetings

EMSA has had two meetings with Member States' experts (29th June 2009 in Paris and 4th December 2009 in Vigo), discussing a pilot project and issues associated with setting in place an integrated AIS/VMS system. The outcomes were as follows:

- The specific objective will be to demonstrate the synergies between VMS and SSN functionalities and outline other benefits. An obvious synergy initially identified was the ability for FMCs to access information on fishing vessels in areas covered by AIS.
- The operational needs were agreed with the CFCA (as the Agency with greatest interest). Once agreed, EMSA proposals for the "VMS/SSN synergies" pilot project and its operational concept **were supported by the participating MSs with slight modifications** (briefly described in the next section).
- It was agreed that for the purposes of the pilot project, a limited number of VMS equipped fishing vessels should be fitted with AIS (or their existing AIS utilised).

5. Operational concept

The operational concepts defined by EMSA, CFCA and the participating MSs are as follows:

- VMS data from the three participating FMCs will be provided to SSN using an interface only accessible to the pilot project participants. The correlation of AIS with VMS would be carried out and displayed via a graphic, web-based interface made available to FMCs and CFCA via SSN/STIRES.
- AIS messages collected by SSN will be distributed to participating FMCs after conversion to NAF format (minimising impact on existing FMC systems). A web interface will also be provided to FMCs as a backup solution.
- SSN/AIS data from fishing vessels (along with the VMS data provided to SSN) will be made available to CFCA.

6. Member States availability

The participating MSs provided information on the current status of their systems (FMC status) and on the competent authorities responsible for each system. All three Member States already have vessels fitted with both AIS and VMS.

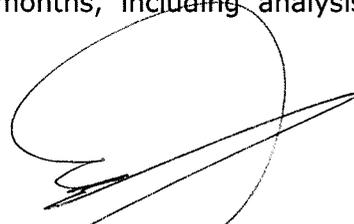
France: The responsibility for operating the French FMC falls under the FMA, which developed the system in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Spain: The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is responsible for developing and operating the FMC in Spain and they have agreed in principle, to participate.

Italy: The Coast Guard developed the FMC on behalf of the Ministry of Food, Forest and Agriculture.

7. Conclusions and proposed follow up actions

- EMSA and CFCA experts have resolved all significant issues and have drafted the technical specification. EMSA is technically prepared and is ready to begin. France, Spain and Italy have also indicated that they are ready.
- The technical specification was sent to CFCA for final review, and to MS experts on 5th February (see a slightly updated version in the attached Annex).
- For the three MSs, their participation will create no technical impacts on their systems, nor any financial implications.
- It is proposed that representatives of the three MSs (at Director level in the maritime and fishery monitoring authorities) be called together to formally agree on participation.
- Once approval is obtained, EMSA will launch SSN technical developments to support the project with the following dates anticipated and planned for:
 - delivery in approximately 6 months from the date of awarding the contract; and
 - then a project duration of 6 months, including analysis of results and drafting conclusions.



Lazaros Aichmalotidis

Chairman of the Experts' Working Group